

## **Formal and Informal Talks of Lecturers in EFL Classroom Interaction**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to discover the characteristics of formal and informal talks of lecturers in EFL classroom. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the researcher collected the data by conducting classroom observations and interview. The research was conducted at the first and fifth semester groups of English Study Program of IAIN Bone. The formal talks which occurred in EFL classroom consist of six characteristics. They were (1) neutral lexis, (2) full form, (3) politeness phenomena, (4) careful turn taking and (5) incongruent mood choice (6) modality for suggestion. The informal talks which occurred in EFL classroom were (1) colloquial lexis, (2) interruption/overlapping, (3) first name/nickname, (4) typical mood choice, (5) modal for probability and (6) modal to express opinion. Meanwhile there were four new characteristics of informal talk which appeared in lecturers' talks. They were (1) regional term, (2) discourse marker, (3) contraction and (4) ellipses sentence. The result shows that the characteristic of formal talk which was frequently used by teacher was full form particularly in asking question. Whereas informal talk happened frequently when teacher delivered material in the form of contraction.

**Keywords:** *Formal and Informal talks, lecturers' talks.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In teaching and learning process, communication between the lecturer and the students is regarded as the important element to perform an effective learning. Talk between lecturer and students are important in teaching and learning process. Through the talk of the lecturer, students are able to understand the lesson. It can be assumed that the lecturer holds main role in the success of teaching and learning process. They talk to make the whole learning successful, starting from opening the class, delivering teaching material, asking questions and managing behaviours in the classroom. Thus, the language used in the classroom determines whether a class

will be successful or not. Xiao-Yan (2006) defines it as a variety of language which sometimes is used by lecturers when they are in the teaching process.

Teaching in the classroom does not only focus on lecturer's thoughts or idea but also focus on how the English lecturer will express whether is suitable for the particular/general situation or not. Hence, choosing the suitable language in delivering material becomes a difficulty for English lecturers in the classroom interaction. Some of them are ignorant of choosing the proper kind of utterance in describing and explaining materials in teaching or use English to give some instructions. They just use language monotonously in their classroom teaching. Consequently, the students sometimes feel bored when they learn English because the lecturer does not have variation in delivering the material in the classroom. This problem makes the aims of the learning process even more difficult to achieve. In accordance with the case above, one of the important things the lecturer should know is the use formal and informal utterances as one aspect of communication among lecturer and students in the classroom interaction.

In EFL classroom context, the communication between lecturer and students is one of a social phenomenon which is not only limited formal situation but also informal situation as well. The formal language may reduce misinterpretation between locutor and interlocutor. It is in line with the statement by Heylighen & Dewaele (1999) who have explained that these are some reasons why people, including the lecturer in the classroom, would prefer formal expressions to contextual ones, or vice-versa.

Regarding some cases of the teachers' limitation the limits of using various language above, the preliminary research conducted by the researcher in one group of students of English Education Department, it is exposed that the students feel bored when the lecturer use monotonous language in teaching because of less variation of lecturer's language makes them feel uninterested and difficult to understand the material. Based on the explanation above the researcher carried out a research about the use of formal and informal talks of the lecturer and students in the EFL classroom.

## **METHOD OF THE RESEARCH**

In this study, descriptive qualitative design was applied. The researcher employed discourse analysis as an approach that was appropriate with the purpose of this research in order to get the description about the characteristics of formal and informal talks used by lecturers and students and the effects of formal and informal talk used by lecturers on students' understanding in EFL classroom. In order to get the data, the researcher did observation, recording, and interview.

The subjects of this research were two lecturers and six students in English Education Department of IAIN Bone academic year 2018/2019. The researcher used purposive sampling technique by choosing two lecturers who commonly use English in teaching and experience lecturers as the subjects. The purposive here was on the lecturer's language variation in teaching. In this research, the researcher selects the lecturers by regarding the language they use in teaching. The duration of recording was about 60 minutes for each meeting. The numbers of the students were

six students as the subjects in interview section. In this research, the researcher used three instruments in collecting data, namely observation checklist, audio recorder, and interview guidance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A research entitled “the Distinct Types of Diction Used by the EFL Teachers in the Classroom Interaction” conducted by Sardi et al., (2017) found that mostly teacher used informal diction or word choice in teaching such as colloquialism, dialects, and slang. This is seemingly because the teacher preferred to focus on the textbook to directly doing an interactive activity with the students. In addition, the lecturers speak Indonesian and local language much more than English in the class considering the student level and interest which is poor. It is in line with the finding of Heylighen & Dewaele (1999) in their research “formality of Language: definition, measurement, and behavioral determinants” found that the formality became larger when the distance in space, time or background between the interlocutors increased, and when the speaker was male, introverted or academically educated. In line with the researches above, they have similarities with the topic that the researcher conducted in terms of formal and informal talks of lecturer in EFL classroom interaction.

### 1. Formal and Informal Talks

Formal language is distinguished by some special attention to form where the speaker tries to be close to the standard form and pronunciation of the language. It is usually used by people on some occasions, such as ceremonies, rituals or examinations (Labov, 1972). Meanwhile, people likely prefer to use informal language when the situation is more ordinary such as a conversation with family and friends, where speakers would pay more than the normal attention to form, if they would want to make sure that their expressions are not misunderstood.

Table 1. Formal and Informal Characteristics (Adapted from Eggins, 2004)

Formal Talk	Informal Talk
Neutral lexis	Attitudinal lexis (purr & snarl words)
Formal lexis	Colloquial lexis
- Full forms	- Abbreviated forms
- No slang	- Slang
Politeness phenomena	Swearing
Careful turn-taking	Interruptions, overlap
Titles, no first name	First names, nick names, diminutives
Incongruent mood choices	Typical mood choice
Modal for deference	Modal to express probability
Modal for suggestions	Modal to express opinion

## FINDINGS

### 1. The Characteristics of Lecturers' Formal and Informal Talks in EFL Classroom

#### a. Formal talks of lecturers

##### 1) Neutral lexis

Extract 1: Correcting student's answer

L : *Oke Bahasa yah. Artinya dalam Bahasa Indonesia adalah Bahasa. Tapi, berbeda pengertiannya. **Definition is not the meaning.** Okay in English...*

S : Language is a form of communication using a word either spoken or gesture with the hands and structure with grammar <XwordX> in <XwordX> system.

The extract 1 above shows that the lecturer corrected students' answer previously. In that case, the lecturer asked the students to define language by using their own words but the students only translated it into Indonesian language. Thus, the lecturer emphasized his statement by saying “**definition is not the meaning**” which was considered as neutral lexis in order to give clear instruction to students. In fact, the student directly gave brief and clear definition about language. Thus, the neutral lexis is able to avoid ambiguity in communicating because it does not have double meaning.

##### 2) Full form

Extract 2: Asking students' condition

L : ***How are you today?***

The extract 2 above shows that the lecturer began the meeting by asking students' conditions. The sentence which was used by lecturer “**how are you today?**” indicates as a characteristic of formal talk. The sentence consists of subject and verb, so it is called as a complete sentence. The subject of the sentence above is “**you**” and the verb is “**are**”. The sentence is also mostly used when someone wants to ask about someone else's condition. Moreover, this sentence is well known by the students.

##### 3) Politeness phenomena

Extract 3: Giving direction

L : *Can you repeat it, **please**? (the lecturer points a student). Make it e.. slower.*

The bold word in the extract 3 above indicates as polite word. The lecturer inserted “**please**” in “Can you repeat it **please**?” to express politeness and emphasis in a request to the student. The situation in the classroom at that time was noisy, so the lecturer requested the other student to repeat what her friend's saying. Based on

the word choice that the lecturer used in requesting student to repeat the definition of language, it was considered as the polite way in requesting.

#### 4) Careful turn taking

##### Extract 4: Asking question

- Ss : *pengulangan?*  
L : *yah, reformulation?*  
Ss : *no*  
L : *no? tidak pernah? Delay correction? Pasti nda pernah dengar*  
*(no? never? Delay correction? Surely you never hear it before before.)*  
Ss : *yes*  
T : *body language? pernah dengar? (have you heard it?)*  
Ss : *yes*

The extract 4 above clearly displays that the lecturer and students take the turn carefully. At the beginning, the students asked the lecturer then she answered student's question. The lecturer continued by saying "***no? tidak pernah? Delay correction? Pasti nda pernah dengar***" to ensure that the students never heard those terms previously. After the students had answered the question, the lecturer asking question again "***body language? pernah dengar?***". In line with lecturer, the students answered the question after the lecturer had finished it. It clearly shows that no interruptions and overlaps happen in this interaction. The lecturer spoke when the students had finished answering. Further, the lecturer asked three questions alternately without interrupting students' answers.

#### 5) Incongruent mood choice

##### Extract 5: Warning students

- L : ... *only explain the main point, you don't have to write all of the words you have read. Okay **five minutes left**.*

The extract 5 above clearly shows that the lecturer warned students in different way. Since the incongruent mood choice related to speech function, this clause "***five minutes left***" included in command. In common sentence, the sentence which function is command, should be consisted of imperative word. On other hand, the clause "***five minutes left***" is not formed by imperative word but it is formed by declarative clause. It can be seen from the word choice which is used in that clause. No imperative words were included in that clause. In fact, the student directly **understood** what the lecturer meant. Therefore, to give a signal to students, the lecturer may use that clause.

#### 6) Modality for suggestion

##### Extract 6: Giving information

- L : ... *kalo kembali ke Bahasa Indonesian but **it will be better if you use English, pasti nilainya lebih tinggi kalo pake Bahasa Inggris** tapi kalo sulit bisa dikembangkan digabung yah bukan full Bahasa Indonesia.*

*(... if you turn back to the Indonesian language but it will be better if you use English, absolutely your score is high if you use English but if it is difficult, you may develop and combine it, do not use all Indonesian language.*

The lecturer's utterance "***it will be better if you use English, pasti nilainya lebih tinggi kalo pake Bahasa Inggris***" indicates that the lecturer suggests students to use full English in answering the question. Moreover, the lecturer promised the high score to whoever answer the question using English. However, majority of students had not understood yet about the material so the lecturer had an idea "***but if it is difficult, you may develop and combine it***". It clearly shows that the lecturer gives second suggestion to the students to combine the Indonesian and English language.

#### **b. Informal talks of lecturers**

##### **1) Colloquial lexis**

Extract 7: Giving direction

(the students start to choose the groups, the class becomes so noisy)

**L** : ***teman-teman! Guys!***

**S** : *hush.. (ask the other students to be quiet).*

The lecturer tended to use "***teman-teman! Guys!***" to get students' attention quickly. It was caused by the situation of the classroom which was considered so noisy. Thus, it clearly shows that the lecturer and students have close relationship in classroom. Additionally, the age of the lecturer was 20s so he was not too clumsy in using various vocabulary in teaching. Therefore, the students felt enjoyable in interacting with their lecturer.

##### **2) Interruption and Overlapping**

Extract 8: Recall the last material

**L** : *ada istilah yang dicetak tebal disitu yah? Apa? (Is there a bold term in it, isn't in? what?)*

**S1** : *syntax*

**L** : *sebelum itu yah [ada]*

**S1** : *[speculative]*

**L** : *yap speculative, speculative grammar (the lecturer is writing on the whiteboard). Apa itu speculative grammar? (what is speculative grammar?)*

**S1** : *process*

**L** : *oke yang-- apa pembahasan minggu lalu [tentang]*

*Okay, the last discussion is [about]*

**S2** : *[saya tunggu dulu kuingatmi]*

*[me, wait for a minute, I have remembered it]*

Based on the extract 8 above, it could be noticed that an overlap occurred in interaction between lecturer and students. When the lecturer was about to mention

the topic of the last material, the student directly took the turn. After that, the lecturer took the turn again by asking about the definition of speculative grammar. A student answered it shortly then the lecturer asked again about the topic of the last material. When the lecturer was about to complete his sentence, another student directly interrupted because she wanted to answer the lecturer's question. The student emphasized that she was able to answer lecturer's question.

### 3) First name, nick name and diminutives

Extract 9: Calling student's name

- L : ...Okay di sudut sana, what's your name? (Who hasn't been mentioned yet. Okay, someone who sits in the corner, what's your name?)*  
*S : my name is Firlinda*  
*T : Firlinda*  
*T : how do we call you?*  
*Ss : **fir**...*

The bold word in extract 9 above clearly shows the use of nickname. The lecturer firstly asked her name then asked what he supposed to call his student. The full name "**Firlinda**" was shortened becoming "**fir**". It was called nick name because the name became shorter than before. The lecturer intended to ask his student's nickname to build a close rapport between lecturer and student in order to avoid rigidity in classroom interaction.

### 4) Typical mood choice

Extract 10: Commanding students

- L : (the lecturer mentions student's name) <XwordsX> how do you pronounce that word? Okay, **make** it louder.*  
*S : /lengwit/*  
*L : Okay, <X words X> **make** it louder.*  
*S : /lengwit/*

Since the mood relates to a verb category or certain form which indicates whether the verb expresses a fact, a command, a question or a statement, the bold word above "**make**" includes as imperative mood. The lecturer used a verb "**make**" to command students to raise his voice. the word "make" represents a command which is formed by imperative mood.

### 5) Modal to express probability

Extract 11: Teasing students

- L : atau **maybe** in the past in your junior high school, senior high school some of your lecturer will say "No" yah atau gurunya mungkin bilang tidak! Salahko! no!*  
*(or maybe in the past your Junior High School, Senior High School some of your lecturer will say "No" right or your lecturer may say No! You are wrong!*

The word “**maybe**” in the extract 10 above was indicated as modal for express probability. In that situation, the lecturer harassed students by saying “**maybe** in the past in your junior high school, senior high school some of your lecturer will say “No” *yah atau gurunya mungkin bilang tidak! Salahko! no!*” which referred to a joke. Absolutely it was wrong when lecturers blamed students by saying “No”. a lecturer supposed to know how to correct students’ error politely. In fact, the lecturer presumed that lecturers in junior and senior high school level made mistakes in correcting students’ error.

#### 6) Modal to express opinion

Extract 12: Lecturer’s disappointment

*L : you have two weeks to study about it. **I think** that’s more than enough. (paused) three minutes, oke yang sudah boleh kumpul.(okay, you may collect it if you have finished it)*

The extract 12 above indicates that the lecturer prefers using the word “**I think**” to express his perception. In that situation, the lecturer gave students a quiz but majority of students could not answer it. The lecturer thought that the students had been ready to get the quiz. In fact, the lecturer had given them two weeks to study. Hopefully, the lecturer believed that two weeks were more than enough to study about it. In short, the lecturer seemed disappointed with the students’ works which was indicated by his utterance “**I think that’s more than enough**”.

#### 7) Regional Term

Extract 13: Telling the way to communicate in past

*L : sekarang enak, ada sms, ada video call. Kita dulu surat**ji**. (Now it is easy, there is message, video call. In past, we used letter only)*

The suffix *-ji* in the lecturer’s utterance above relates to the regional term. The lecturer used suffix *-ji* which was derived from Buginese indicating the quantity of things. The suffix *-ji* above emphasized that in past people only used letter to communicate to others. The lecturer tended to use regional term to show the closeness with the students. Moreover, student looked enjoyable and happy with the lecturer’s joke.

#### 8) Discourse Markers

Extract 14: Confirming student’s answer

*L : how about works?*

*Ss : verb, verb*

*L : **oke** verb...*

The bold word “**oke**” in extract 14 above was indicated as a discourse marker which was used by lecturer. It clearly showed that the lecturer used “**oke**” to confirm student’s correct answer. Additionally, the lecturer mention students’ answer after the word “**oke**”. In short, the lecturer agreed with students’ answer which was proven by his word “**oke**”.



### 9) Contraction

Extract 15: Telling the lesson topic

- L* : today ***we're*** going to talk about family, who are in the family?  
*Ss* : father, mother, daughter, son, brother, sister  
*L* : ***that's*** brainstorming

The extract 15 above shows that two contractions happened in lecturer turn. The first was in the word ***we're*** which was uttered by lecturer in telling lesson topic. The lecturer shortened it which was its full form "***we are***". The lecturer seemed simplifying her explanation about brainstorming. Thus, she did not spend much time to explain it. Next, the lecturer's utterance "***that's*** brainstorming" implied emphasizing about what she had explained was the example of brainstorming. In short, the use of contraction can be as an agreement about something.

### 10) Ellipses sentence

Extract 16: Asking question

- L* : oke ada berapa tahap? ***How many stages?***  
*Ss* : four (shouted) five  
*L* : ***how many?***  
*S1* : actually five

The extract 16 above refers to the use of ellipses sentence which was used by lecturers. The lecturer was asking students "***How many stages?***" which was indicated as incomplete sentence. However, the students could catch what the lecturer meant. Even though the lecturer did not mention what stages, undoubtedly the student had already known it. It was proven by the ability of students answering the question. The sentence supposed to be "***How many stages of Linguistics history?***" but the lecturer omitted "***Linguistics history***".

## DISCUSSION

### 1. The characteristics of lecturers' formal and informal talks in EFL classroom

The result of this research was analyzed based on the characteristics of formal and informal language proposed by (Eggins, 2004). Based on the result of the analysis, it was found that in the classroom interaction in terms of formal talk, the lecturers used *neutral lexis*, *full form*, *politeness phenomena*, *careful turn-taking*, *incongruent mood choice*, and *modal for suggestion*. Whereas other characteristics such as; *title and modal for deference* did not appear in lecturers' utterances.

In the form of sentence, the researcher found that the lecturer mostly asked question using formal language in full form sentence which was more than 50%. The lecturer preferred to ask students using complete sentence without slang and abbreviation in order to give clear question to students. It is supported by Heylighen & Dewaele (1999) who share some reasons why people would prefer formal

expressions to contextual ones, or vice-versa. More formal language has less chance to be misinterpreted by others who do not share the same context as the sender. Therefore, the students understood it immediately. According to them, deep formality is characterized by attention to form for the sake of clear understanding. It is in line with the research conducted by Atkinson (2015) that lecturer should realize different types of questioning by different level of formality. It means that lecturer should avoid uncomplete sentence in questioning student. Thus, student may convey information as the lecturer asked before.

Meanwhile, the informal talks which occurred in EFL classroom consist of six characteristics which were *colloquial lexis*, *interruption & overlapping*, *first name and nickname*, *typical mood choice*, *modal to express probability* and *modal to express opinion*. Whereas *attitudinal lexis* and *swearing* did not appear in classroom interaction. As Heylighen & Dewaele (1999) emphasized that an informal style is more flexible, direct, implicit, and involved, but less informative. According to them, styles; pronouns, adverbs, verbs and interjections are more frequent in informal styles. Moreover, the researcher found four new characteristics of informal talks which occurred in classroom interaction. They are *regional term*, *discourse markers*, *contraction* and *ellipse sentence*. Therefore, it can be inferred that the novelty of the research was found in lecturer's informal talks.

Informal talk happened frequently when lecturer delivered the material. The lecturer preferred using informal language in the form of contraction in explaining the material. It is supported by the research conducted by Sardi et al., (2017) found that the EFL lecturers used the informal language dominantly than formal language in delivering material. However, the previous finding did not provide any detail about the type of informal language used by the lecturer. Therefore, it is one of the novelties of this research that the researcher provides a detailed information about what types of informal language used by the lecturer.

## CONCLUSION

The most dominant lecturer's formal talks occurred in classroom interaction was full form particularly in asking question. The informal talks which occurred in EFL classroom consist of six characteristics which were *colloquial lexis*, *interruption or overlapping*, *first name or nickname*, *typical mood choice*, *modal to express probability* and *modal to express opinion*. Whereas *attitudinal lexis* and *swearing* did not appear in classroom interaction. Additionally, the researcher found four new characteristics of informal talks which occurred in classroom interaction. They are *regional term*, *discourse markers*, *contraction* and *ellipses sentence*. Regarding student talks, using title mostly occurred in interaction among lecturer and students. Meanwhile, the informal talks which occurred in EFL classroom particularly in student talks were *colloquial lexis*, *interruption/overlapping*, *first name and nickname*, *typical mood choice*, and *modal for probability*. Most of the informal talks uttered by the students were included as new characteristic of informal language that was in form of *regional term*. The result of the interview showed that the students preferred when the lecturer used more informal language. When the lecturer used informal language, the students

feel more comfortable and closer to the lecturer. The use of informal language also gives positive effect to the students particularly in avoiding boring situation in classroom. Moreover, the dictions used by the lecturer in informal talk were more familiar with the student which made the students easier to catch the meaning of what the lecturer tried to convey, as the students wanted the lecturer to explain the material in the language which was easy to understand.

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